

Re: William

by William, 01-Jan-15 09:03 PM GMT

Happy New Year everyone! Fortunate to start the year with a bang this morning, with a Red Admiral looking for somewhere to hide from the weather at Exeter St David's station of all places 😊

Re: William

by trevor, 02-Jan-15 02:35 AM GMT

Hi William,

Great find at St. David's Stn. This will make the Red Admiral once again a 12 month a year species. I have seen RAs in every Winter month over the years, and I expect we will see some more later in February if it's mild.

Wishing you a Happy Butterflyingly 2015.
TREVOR.

Re: William

by David M, 02-Jan-15 05:01 AM GMT

Can't get an earlier sighting than that! Sometimes you just need to be in the right place at the right time...

Re: William

by William, 03-Jan-15 01:15 AM GMT

Thanks guys, hope I'm in the right place at the right time again with Brown Hairstreaks this summer 😊. I managed to find another Red Admiral today (this time in native Somerset), flying in the weak sunshine, may this be the start of a long run of luck!

BWs,

William

Re: William

by Wurzel, 04-Jan-15 12:07 AM GMT

Excellent find William - I hope your long continues right through 2015 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 19-Jan-15 01:19 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel - same to you!

Hibernation Station

A couple of wintery immature stages from the last few weeks.



Brown Hairstreak Ovum

A Brown Hairstreak Egg against an unusually sunny, blue sky. I've had lots of luck with these this winter, finding them in 5 different grid squares near my home!



Small Skipper Larvae

Small Skipper Larvae in their trademark hibernation cocoons, looking forward to seeing these develop!

It's not all cold and grey though, I managed to find another Red Admiral today, basking on a dead tree at a local spot – roll on spring!

Re: William

by Nick Broomer, 19-Jan-15 02:22 AM GMT

Hi William,

your photo of the Small Skipper larva is quite remarkable. Well done.

All the best, Nick.

Re: William

by David M, 19-Jan-15 04:07 AM GMT

Well done, William. Those cocoons with tiny Skipper larvae within must surely be a first on UKB?

Re: William

by William, 19-Jan-15 04:39 AM GMT

Nick – Thank you very much, a great compliment after all the magnificent immature stage photos you have been posting!

David – You are most kind, though I believe the maestros (Pete and Vince) got there first 😊

BWs,

William

Re: William

by David M, 19-Jan-15 04:49 AM GMT

"William" wrote:

You are most kind, though I believe the maestros (Pete and Vince) got there first

Were they wild images though?

Re: William

by William, 08-Mar-15 05:46 AM GMT

It Begins!

Having gotten off the mark on New Year's Day and had few subsequent sightings (apart from a rogue Speckled Wood in the sitting room yesterday – not sure of its provenance!) I was champing at the bit when I saw a nice weather forecast for today. Unusually, the predicted forecast was delivered, and my garden was the place to be, with 3 Peacocks, 1 Small Tortoiseshell and 2 Commas, and more bees than you could shake a stick at – spring is here at last!

The Commas in particular proved very photogenic...



Comma



Comma



Comma



Comma

Buoyed by this discovery I decided to make a short trip down the road that I'd been planning for some time. Turns out I timed it just right (Thanks Pete!) and I was rewarded with 2 very nice webs of Marsh Fritillary larvae. It was a great joy to see these for the first time, very active in the sun, wriggling around investigating grass stems and basking happily. My advice to anyone looking for them: watch where you're walking! At this time of year they're very small and very easily missed!



Marsh Fritillary Larva



Marsh Fritillary Larvae



Marsh Fritillary Larva



Marsh Fritillary Larvae



Marsh Fritillary Larvae



Marsh Fritillary Larva

Continuing the larval theme, I checked on the Small Copper larva, who has survived the winter (thanks again Pete!) and seems to be just waking up. If you look in the photo below, you can see the silken pad on which he spent the winter just below him!



Small Copper Larva

Re: William

by Pete Eeles, 08-Mar-15 05:27 PM GMT

What an excellent start to the year, Will! Look forward to hearing how the Marshies and Small Copper are coming along!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 08-Mar-15 05:49 PM GMT

Great stuff William and some lovely photos, I particularly like the second Comma 😊

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: William

by Mike Robinson, 09-Mar-15 01:08 AM GMT

The Comma Butterflies look lovely.

Re: William

by William, 21-Apr-15 06:20 AM GMT

Thanks Guys, I was delighted with the Commas, and the Small Copper larva continues to thrive!

Tipping Point

With the sun finally shining over the past few days, I've been delighted to see lots of the spring emergees on the patch. Orange Tips seem to be doing particularly well, really enjoying the Cuckoo Flower, Garlic Mustard and Honesty I've planted!



Orange Tip



Orange Tip



Orange Tip

Such are the numbers that today I found an amazing 8 males roosting in a small patch of Cow Parsley in the corner of the garden – a strange sight given their normally pugnacious nature!



Spot the Orange Tips!



Orange Tips

Re: William

by Butterflysaurus rex, 22-Apr-15 06:03 AM GMT

I wish I had 8 Orange Tips roosting in the corner of my garden William! My particular area is practically an Orange Tip fee zone. You have to travel in land a bit to find some in any numbers. I'm not finding it easy this year.

I'm really enjoying some of the thin DOF you're using in some of your images, it gives them a nice & dreamy look. Well worth sacrificing a little bit of sharpness for in my opinion. 😊

All the best

James

Re: William

by Wurzel, 22-Apr-15 06:06 AM GMT

Cracking OT shots – I too am really struggling with OTs this year – I keep seeing them but getting a shot is another matter entirely 🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by bugboy, 22-Apr-15 06:09 AM GMT

Beautiful imagies William, proving that you can never have enough Orange Tip Pictures!

Re: William

by David M, 22-Apr-15 06:34 AM GMT

Superb shots as ever, William.

We must all 'fill our boots' whilst this delightful species shares our spring.

We are a long time without them.

Re: William

by William, 24-Apr-15 04:08 AM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments guys, much appreciated. It's always a challenge to make the most of the brief Orange Tip season, but as luck would have it, they've been coming to me 😊

BWs,

William

Re: William

by Pauline, 24-Apr-15 01:57 PM GMT

Your photos are a delight to view William and they always bring that something different with them.

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 25-Apr-15 04:27 AM GMT

Lovely photos William and those roosting Orange-tips are a great find.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: William

by William, 04-May-15 02:14 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline and Neil – it's more Orange Tips I'm afraid!

Recent Doings

Unfortunately, Orange Tips remain the only thing I've really had the chance to photograph so far this year, owing to rubbish weather and a lack of time on my hands, they're proving very accommodating, enjoying the Garlic Mustard and Bluebells in the garden, there are few butterflies I like more, so charismatic!



Orange Tips



Orange Tip - Female



Orange Tips



Orange Tip - Female



Orange Tip - Female

I realised a long-held ambition today when I found a mating pair in my 'wild patch' - all that gardening was worth it!



Orange Tips



Orange Tips

And whilst looking for Early Purple Orchids yesterday I spotted this male perched on my quarry, my two favourite things in one photo!



Orange Tip

Finally, one of the Brown Hairstreak larvae I rescued from a flail-cut hedgerow earlier this year.



Brown Hairstreak Larva

Re: William

by Katrina, 06-May-15 06:31 AM GMT

Superb orange tip on orchid photo!

Re: William

by William, 11-May-15 01:56 AM GMT

Thanks Katrina - I was delighted to get it!

Odds and Sods

The weather has been pretty poor here recently, and has prevented me from getting out and making the spring Duke/Dingy and Grizzled Skipper pilgrimage (yet!) Still, there has been plenty going on in the garden.

Orange Tips...



Orange Tip

And their eggs...



Orange Tip Ovum



Orange Tip Ova

And best of all, a sight I have waited for (for several years), a freshly-emerged, 'home-grown' Common Blue, I found him this morning, drying his wings on my specially-planted Bird's Foot Trefoil, and managed a few pictures as he took his first flight - stunningly fresh!



Common Blue



Common Blue



Common Blue



Common Blue



Common Blue

Re: William

by David M, 11-May-15 06:39 AM GMT

Great images of the Common Blue, William.

They're absolutely divine when fresh and you couldn't have captured one any earlier in its adult life cycle.

Re: William

by Pauline, 13-May-15 02:40 PM GMT

Your OT shots have been superb William 🍷. You must be finding it wonderfully rewarding to have your gardening efforts starting to pay off and be able to view the results on your doorstep 😊. Motivation for others to follow in your footsteps.

Re: William

by William, 14-May-15 04:11 AM GMT

Thanks David – it was positively shining! You're quite right Pauline, it's been a real joy to see the butterflies flocking to the garden this spring. It's taken some (but not all) of the challenge out of photography!

Kicking Off

With a bit of warm weather over the past couple of days, it's been nice to see things getting going on the patch. Yesterday, I enjoyed my first Small Coppers of the year, and at the same spot, the rather strange sight of this Painted Lady feeding on Bluebells, two sights I normally associate with different ends of the year.



Painted Lady

The Brown Hairstreak larvae are thriving...



Brown Hairstreak Larva - First Instar



Brown Hairstreak Larva - Second Instar

Buoyed by the Common Blue I found in the garden, I visited a local spot and was delighted to see large numbers already on the wing (c.30), with mating pairs and a good mix of males and females.



Common Blues



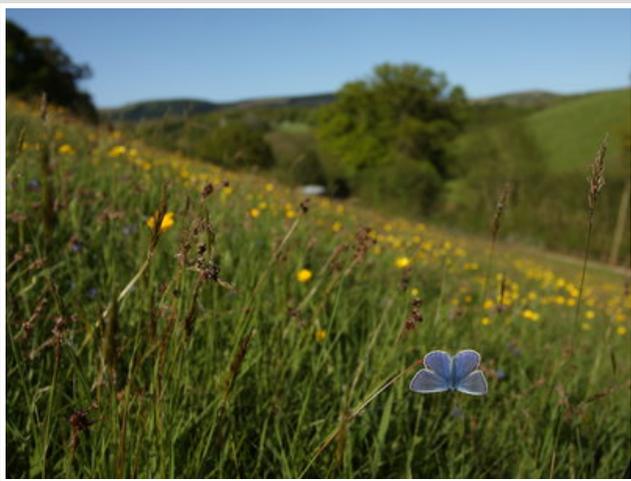
Special Edition Common Blue



Common Blues



Common Blues



Common Blue

Re: William

by Pete Eeles, 14-May-15 04:13 AM GMT

Loving that last shot in particular, William! Nice work!

Cheers,

– Pete

Re: William

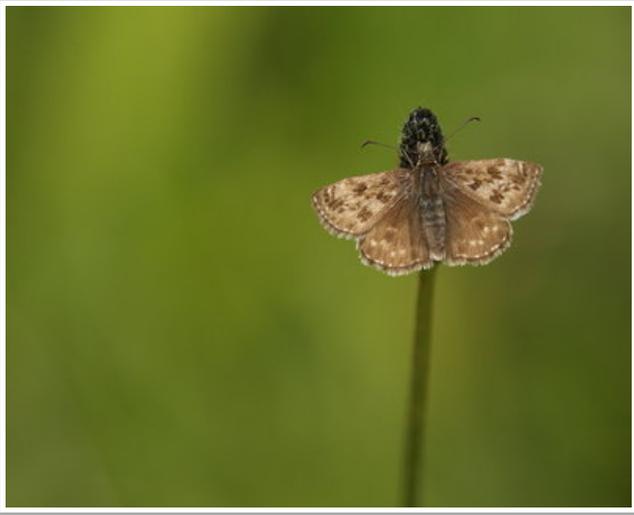
by William, 25-May-15 05:39 AM GMT

Thanks Pete – nice to get a bit of the place in the background, and a lovely place it is too!

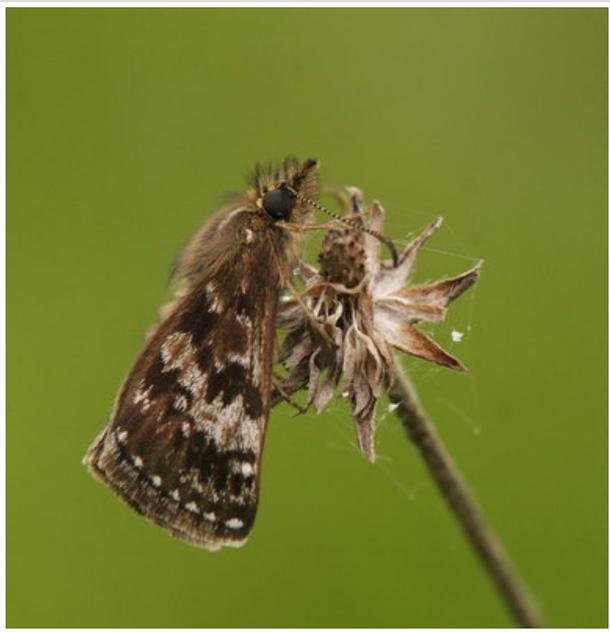
Recent Doings

Unfortunately, I've been very busy recently, but this weekend managed to sneak out and look for some butterflies, well worth the effort! First stop was Buckland Wood, under heavy cloud. It's not a place I've visited before, having always been lucky at Thurlbear, but, being in the area this year, I thought I'd give it a go. It's rather like Thurlbear, but more open, and less oppressive, and (apparently) more Dukes, though I didn't manage to find any in the rubbish weather.

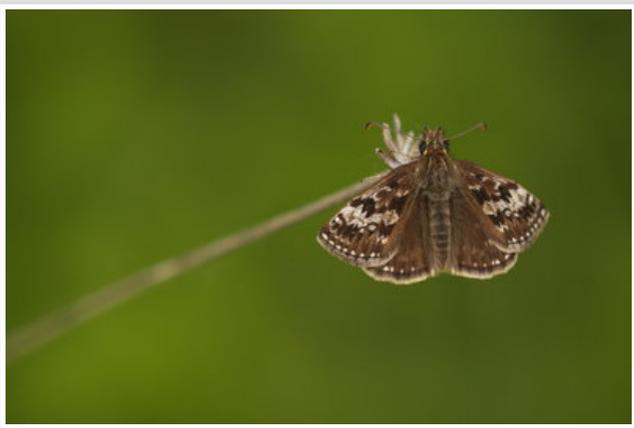
Still, there were plenty of Dingy Skippers around to keep me amused, and a quick look revealed a few eggs on Bird's Foot Trefoil.



Dingy Skipper



Dingy Skipper

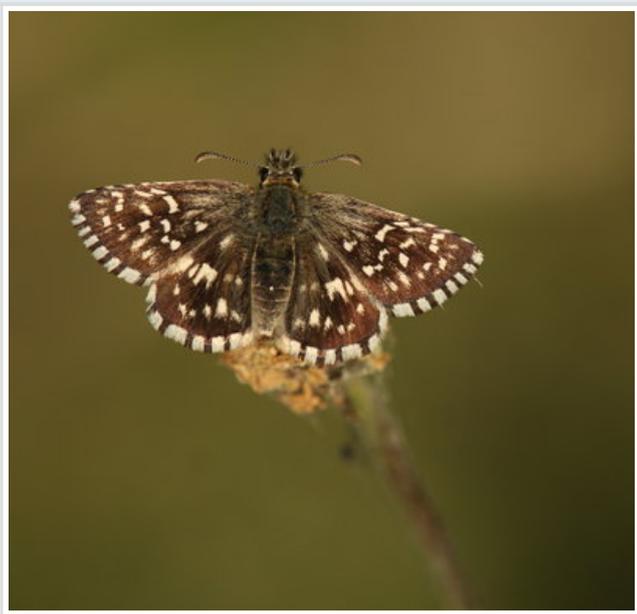


Dingy Skipper

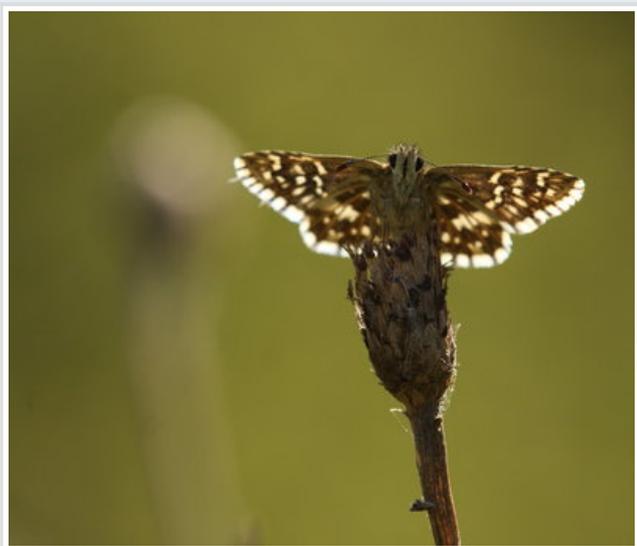


Dingy Skipper Ovum

Next up was Thurlbear in the evening sun, which was, as ever, cracking. Lots of Dingy Skippers were seen, along with abundant Common Blues and Small Heaths, and my target, Grizzled Skipper. Dukes have apparently been scarce there this year, and I worry for their future.



Grizzled Skipper



Grizzled Skipper

The Small Copper larva finally emerged yesterday – delighted to have reared him from egg right through to adult, thank you Pete for all your advice!



Small Copper Larva



Small Copper Pupa



Small Copper Pupa



Small Copper Pupa - 2 Days Before Emergence



Small Copper Pupa – 1 Day Before Emergence



Small Copper

The Brown Hairstreak larvae are all second instar now and quite active feeders.



Brown Hairstreak Larva



Brown Hairstreak Larva

Orange Tip larvae are hatching on the Garlic Mustard too, this one was pretending to be one of Guy's Purple Emperor caterpillars, hiding in a rain drop!



Orange Tip Larva

Re: William

by Goldie M, 26-May-15 12:55 AM GMT

Very interesting photos William, keep them coming Goldie 😊

Re: William

by bugboy, 26-May-15 01:21 AM GMT

Your Common Blue's somehow passed me by when you posted them 😞 those wide shots are fantastic 😊. Might have to have a browse through the trefoils looking for Dingy eggs now, they look like they may be quite obvious. (As far as butterfly eggs are concerned at any rate!)

Re: William

by William, 26-May-15 01:56 AM GMT

Thanks Goldie and Bugboy, more luck than judgement with the Dingy egg, it was on the first Trefoil that I searched! I think they prefer shorter growth, the kind that you find in stony areas and anthills – good luck, and well done with those Glanvilles 😊

BWs,

William

Re: William

by Pete Eeles, 26-May-15 03:08 AM GMT

Excellent shots William! For anyone wanting to locate Dingy Skipper eggs, take a look at this:

<http://www.warwickshire-butterflies.org.uk/downloads/Field-Craft-Lessons/Field-Craft-Lesson-4-Find-Dingy-Skipper-Eggs-2008.pdf>

I found 4 today in the space of 15 minutes at Greenham Common.

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: William

by bugboy, 26-May-15 03:18 AM GMT

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Excellent shots William! For anyone wanting to locate Dingy Skipper eggs, take a look at this:

<http://www.warwickshire-butterflies.org.uk/downloads/Field-Craft-Lessons/Field-Craft-Lesson-4-Find-Dingy-Skipper-Eggs-2008.pdf>

I found 4 today in the space of 15 minutes at Greenham Common.

Cheers,

- Pete

Thanks Pete, very useful read. I shall put that advice to test tomorrow 😊

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 26-May-15 05:31 AM GMT

Really interesting report with some fantastic photos William. I love the larvae images and that Small Copper is beautiful 😊

"Pete Eeles" wrote:

Excellent shots William! For anyone wanting to locate Dingy Skipper eggs, take a look at this:

<http://www.warwickshire-butterflies.org.uk/downloads/Field-Craft-Lessons/Field-Craft-Lesson-4-Find-Dingy-Skipper-Eggs-2008.pdf>

I found 4 today in the space of 15 minutes at Greenham Common.

Cheers,

- Pete

I have seen Mike Slater in action and his ability to find Dingy and Grizzled Skipper eggs is amazing. I am sure that he has got them trained to lay on exactly the plants that he wants for convenience 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: William

by William, 31-May-15 02:45 AM GMT

Thanks everyone for the kind comments and Pete for the information on Dingy Skipper eggs, some food for thought!

Recent Doings

I managed to fit some butterfly-hunting around work this week. A trip up to Haddon Hill on Monday brought me two lovely fresh Green Hairstreaks after an hour and a half of searching, along with a couple of Holly Blues. For those planning on making the trip, I believe Heath Fritillaries are now out there (I would be happy to help anyone out with details), though it will be a week or two before the numbers build, and Small Pearl-Bordered down the road at Haddon Moor. It will be interesting to see if any Marsh Fritillaries are seen at the latter after my female last year!

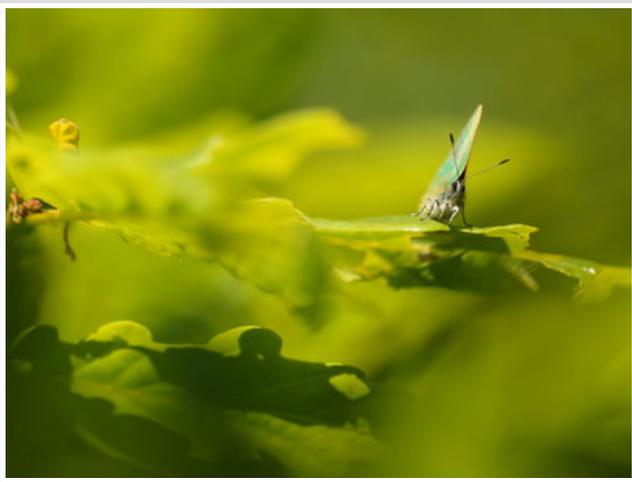


Green Hairstreak

Bitten by the Hairstreak bug, on Tuesday, I headed up to Crowcombe Park Gate on the Quantocks. The Quantocks can be an unforgiving place when the wind howls across the ridge over the heather, and so it was for nearly two hours, until I checked one last wood edge and found 9 Green Hairstreaks – hooray!



Green Hairstreak



Green Hairstreak



Green Hairstreak

Re: William

by Pauline, 31-May-15 04:04 AM GMT

Just catching up William and your Dingy shots are stunning. I love the SC shots too – You did so much better than me as mine didn't make it for reasons I still don't understand. It is still a butterfly I would love to monitor through the early stages so very well done. I shall be coming to you now for advice 😊

Re: William

by Nick Broomer, 31-May-15 05:25 AM GMT

Hi Will,

great photos all the way through your diary. Love the Green Hairstreaks. And well done for rearing the Small Coppers successfully, smashing photos on the early stages.

All the best, Nick.

Re: William

by William, 31-May-15 05:42 AM GMT

Thanks Pauline 😊, Small Copper larvae are endearing, slow-moving creatures – I really enjoyed breeding my one! I'd be happy to give you any advice you want, though I got all mine from Pete, so I can take no credit!

BWs,

William

Re: William

by Paul Harfield, 03-Jun-15 07:22 AM GMT

Hi William

Just catching up with your diary. Great photos as always, I particularly like that last Green Hairstreak 😊

Re: William

by Maximus, 03-Jun-15 06:57 PM GMT

Hi William, lovely photos through your diary 😊 You seem to have made the most of the Orange-tips, nice to see the eight roosting males in your garden. That's a beautiful Small Copper you reared too 😊

Re: William

by Matsukaze, 04-Jun-15 06:45 AM GMT

Excellent photos as always – is that a Prominent larva that can be glimpsed at far left on the third of the Green Hairstreak photos?

Re: William

by William, 09-Jun-15 02:38 AM GMT

Thank you all for your kind words – sorry Nick, I think I just missed you when I replied to Pauline, Green Hairstreaks, as you've probably guessed, are one of my favourites too 😊! Thanks Jack and Maximus – I was certainly lucky with the Orange Tips, nice for them to come to me for once! I think it is a bud in the corner, Chris, though the oaks on which the Green Hairstreaks perched were absolutely crawling with Mottled Umber larvae!

Exmoor

Things are starting to get going on the Exmoor sites, many of which are within striking distance of home. Heath Fritillaries look set to have a good year up at Haddon, I counted 14 in 40 minutes on Sunday. All bar one were males, so it looks like it's still early days. With good weather forecast, I expect numbers will peak over the next 10 days or so. Wood Tiger, Green Hairstreak and the rather pretty micro: *Olethreutes arcuella* are all on the wing there too. I know the site fairly well, so I'm happy to help anyone planning on making the trip with directions.



Heath Fritillary



Heath Fritillary



Green Hairstreak

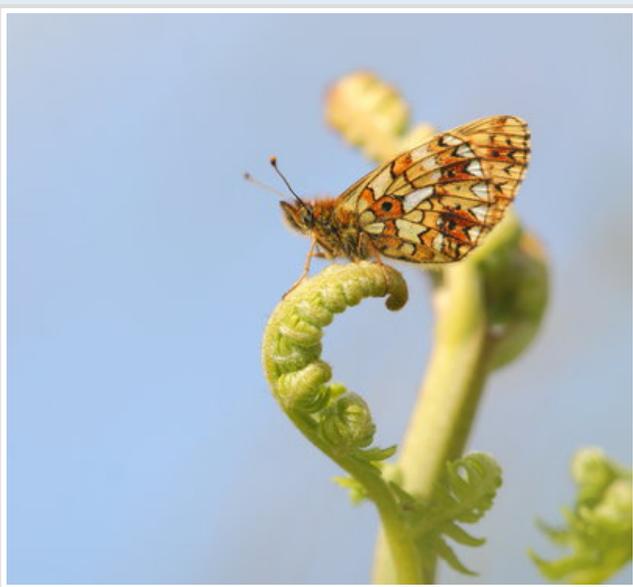


Heath Fritillary

Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillaries also look set for a good year, they're on the wing just down the road at Haddon moor, and in excellent numbers at Clatworthy Reservoir. I saw over 20 in terrible, windy weather on Saturday (on the path down to the angler's hut) and there have been reports of up to 50. At one point 8 were clustered in an area of grass about a metre square, an amazing sight, which I utterly failed to do justice to with the camera!



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillaries



Small Pearl - Bordered Fritillary

Re: William

by millerd, 09-Jun-15 04:54 AM GMT

Only just caught up with your Quantock Green Hairstreaks – seen at the place I saw my first ones ever way back in about 1970. Lovely images.

Dave

Re: William

by Katrina, 09-Jun-15 06:04 AM GMT

Beautiful photos especially the third Heath Fritillary one!

Re: William

by bugboy, 09-Jun-15 06:18 AM GMT

I really like your style of photography, intelligent and thoughtfully composed. That first SPBF with the second animal blurred in the background is beautiful.

Re: William

by Willow, 09-Jun-15 11:00 PM GMT

Thank you for the timely **Heath Fritillary** update on Haddon Hill William 😊 Time to start planning my visit...only need a bit of good weather now, minus the winds 😊

Lovely images and very interesting reports, much enjoyed!

Regards,

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: William

by Maximus, 15-Jun-15 05:22 AM GMT

Great shots from Exmoor William, in particular those superb Heath Fritillaries 😊

Re: William

by Essexbuzzard, 15-Jun-15 06:57 AM GMT

Glad you're getting your fill of Heath Frits, William. They don't last long, so make the most of them! Cracking little insects...

Re: William

by William, 23-Jun-15 06:11 AM GMT

Thanks for all the compliments on the fritillary pictures, I always count my lucky stars to have such amazing butterflies only 15 minutes from home!

Cracking Collard

As many may know, I have a bit of a thing, being a Somerset boy, for Large Blues. Last year, I helped out at Collard, working with the Large Blue Ranger (Jono) on the transects, and showing people the 'star of the show'. This year, I was lucky enough to do the same, with this year's warden, Rosie. As ever, it was thoroughly enjoyable, the Blues seem to be doing a bit better this year, and I saw around 15 whilst on site for the open day on Sunday. It always gives me a real thrill to see such an iconic butterfly flying again in my home county, it really doesn't get much better!

Particular hotspots this year have been the quarry (particularly favoured on cooler, windier days by egg-laying females) and the band of scrub below the eastern glade and along the middle of the site (again favoured in breezier conditions), that is not, however, to say that the blues aren't using the whole site, which they are, particularly in warmer spells.

Sadly I didn't get much time for 'serious' photography, helping to find the butterflies, but it was nevertheless a delight to see good numbers of one of my favourite species, and in such excellent company!



Large Blue – Female



Large Blue – Male



Large Blue – Female

Incidentally, Large Skippers are putting on a good show closer to home...



Large Skipper

And I can't resist sharing these two, in the Moth Trap over the last couple of nights...



Burnished Brass



Elephant Hawk Moth

Re: William

by David M, 23-Jun-15 06:13 AM GMT

Wow! I've never seen an Elephant Hawk Moth. That's a great spot, William!

Re: William

by Pauline, 23-Jun-15 02:49 PM GMT

Fabulous photos of 2 stunning moths William 🍷🍷 Although I am curious regarding which moths are about in my area I am reluctant to go down the moth trap route as I fear it could become/is becoming quite obsessive 😊

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 24-Jun-15 04:14 AM GMT

Some lovely images recently William, as others have said you have a distinctive style to your photos which makes them stand out.

That Elephant Hawk Moth brings back memories of when I was a nipper and used to find the caterpillars and rear them through. When freshly emerged these must be one of the most beautiful moths to be found anywhere.

Cheers,

Neil

Re: William

by Wurzel, 24-Jun-15 06:32 AM GMT

Lovely shots William and good to see the Large Blue ding better at Collard this year 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by Willrow, 25-Jun-15 05:24 AM GMT

Ah William! two lovely macro-moth images, the framing simply does wonders, not that I'm implying such superb creatures need improving 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: William

by William, 12-Jul-15 09:37 PM GMT

Thanks for the kind comments everyone - it's nice to occasionally cross over to the dark side with a few moths, and there are few more impressive than Elephant Hawks!

Catching Up

Before I post a few Alpine pictures, some catching up on all the big 'summer boom' of emergences before I went away!

Whilst up in that general direction, I managed a (very brief) trip to Bishop Middleham Quarry, to catch up with my first Northern Brown Arguses - lovely little butterflies, and easily found in the area that Pete suggested, the upper part of the quarry, around the Rock Rose, Bird's Foot Trefoil and Forget-me-not.



Northern Brown Argus



Northern Brown Argus



Northern Brown Argus

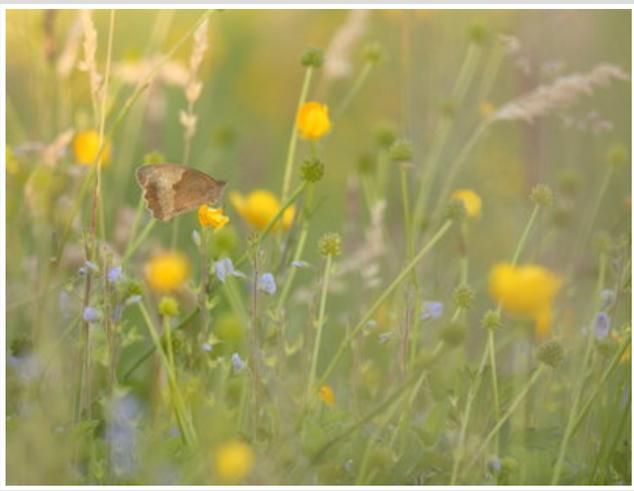
My new thing in the evening is to go hunting for sleepy browns – the only time I can ever get a photo of them!



Meadow Brown



Marbled White



Meadow Brown



Marbled White

Orange Tip Larvae have all now disappeared off into the bushes to pupate.



Orange Tip Larva Pupating

I did manage a rather poor photo of one eating its newly-shed skin.



Orange Tip Larva

The Common Blue larvae on the Bird's Foot Trefoil are growing fast!



Common Blue Larva



Common Blue Larva

Almost as fast as my rescued Brown Hairstreak larvae, which have now pupated!



Brown Hairstreak Pupa

Re: William

by Willow, 12-Jul-15 10:41 PM GMT

Lovely images and general report William 😊

Your image of the **Meadow Brown** among meadow flowers really hits an accord with me...positively painterly 😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt - venture out"

Re: William

by David M, 12-Jul-15 10:46 PM GMT

I'm fond of those shots too. Keep 'em coming, William.

Re: William

by Wurzel, 13-Jul-15 01:12 AM GMT

Stunning images William 😊 Are the Northern Brown Argus more aggressive than their 'soft southern' cousins? 😊
Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by Katrina, 13-Jul-15 01:26 AM GMT

All charming photos – I particularly like your first Marbled White photo with the contrast between the upright fresh butterfly and the drooping petals.

Re: William

by William, 14-Jul-15 12:07 AM GMT

Thanks for all the compliments, Guys, when Browns perch low in the grass, it often makes for a nice atmospheric photo, I just press the shutter 😊!

As for the Northern Brown Argus, Wurzel, I see few of their southern cousins in my part of the world, but I thought they were rather more placid, peacefully bumbling around on the Rock Rose and Bird's Foot Trefoil, lovely little butterflies!

BWs,

William

Re: William

by William, 17-Jul-15 05:07 AM GMT

Foreign Fling – Lycaenids

From the 5th to the 11th of this month, I was lucky enough to spend a bit of time in the verdant Alpine meadows of the French Alps (with a little stop over in the Loire Valley). As ever when visiting this part of the world, I spent most of my time utterly lost for words, the sheer quantity and variety of butterflies, in such an incredible setting are always enough to reaffirm the wonder that runs through this absorbing hobby, quite amazing!

I managed 91 species of butterfly during my self-propelled 6 days, and even managed to find a few interesting ones – more by luck than judgement. If anything in the Alps, it's difficult not to, such is the seething mass of biodiversity that you encounter at every turn, if you haven't gone – go!

Mazarine Blues were fairly regularly encountered at most altitudes, right up to 2200m.



Mazarine Blue (with Eros and Small)

Chalkhill Blues began to appear towards the end of the trip.



Chalkhill Blue

I was delighted to find a single male Alpine Blue puddling with the previous Mazarine Blue, occasionally stumbling upon 'proper' Alpine species like this was a real thrill.



Alpine Blue

Other blues seen were Small, Turquoise, Eros, Common, Silver-Studded, Short-Tailed (in the Loire), Brown Argus, Northern Brown Argus, Geranium Argus, and Damon. Sadly I didn't manage to catch up with the legendary Glandon – one for another trip!

If the Alpine blues are good, the coppers are even better, my favourite, by a long chalk has to be Scarce, the combination of this species' stunning colours and willingness to pose make it a real delight (they're also anything but Scarce 😊)



Scarce Copper - Male



Scarce Copper - Female

The males, with their brilliant orange upperwings can often be spotted from some distance.



Scarce Copper - Male



Scarce Copper - Female



Scarce Copper - Male

I think Purple - Edged were pretty much over by the time I arrived, but I did find a nice mating pair 😊



Purple – Edged Coppers

Also seen were Sooty Coppers (a few territorial males here and there), Green Hairstreak (3 at about 2000m) and White – Letter Hairstreak.

Re: William

by Wurzel, 17-Jul-15 06:08 AM GMT

Cracking shots William 🍷 especially the Alpine Blue – a real fuzzy littel wonder! 😊🍷🍷

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by Willow, 18-Jul-15 12:54 AM GMT

Delightful William...and no I don't mean your delightful William (though I suppose you could be 😊👁️)...I mean those images 😊😊

BW's

Bill 😊

"When in doubt – venture out"

Re: William

by Pauline, 18-Jul-15 02:29 AM GMT

Your style of photography is very unique and artistic William and is one of the reasons I return to your diary again and again. Your recent images of exotic butterflies are lovely but the photo which captures my attention and is my favourite of them all is the Chalkhill. Beautiful – wish I could emulate that.

Re: William

by Katrina, 18-Jul-15 03:41 AM GMT

Wonderful photos. The female Scarce Copper is my favourite! 😊

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 18-Jul-15 03:45 AM GMT

I agree with Pauline's comments about the artistic qualities of your photos William, a lovely style that stands out from the crowd 😊

Cheers,

Neil

Re: William

by David M, 18-Jul-15 04:01 AM GMT

Scarce Copper is one of my favourite butterflies, and yours has a particularly beautiful underside.

I'm surprised you didn't see any Glandon Blues though. They were pretty common where I went (well done on the Alpine Blue though – a delightful species).

Re: William

by William, 19-Jul-15 04:03 AM GMT

Thank you guys for the kind words – the style of the photos was more out of necessity than any particular artistic disposition, I, like David and Guy, experienced the heatwave in the Alps, which meant things were difficult to approach for close ups, nevertheless, I was delighted with how some of them turned out 😊

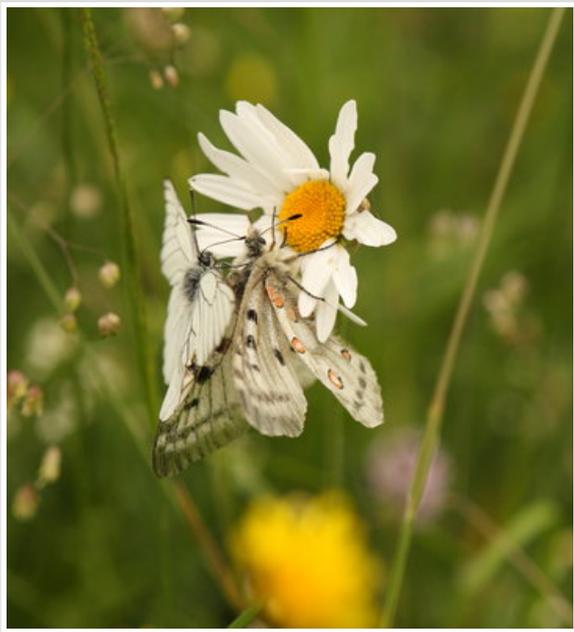
David – Collins suggests that Glandon colonies are small and often over-looked, and since much of my butterflying was done on family walks, I probably walked straight through suitable habitat without seeing the blues, hopefully I'll be able to go back with a bit more time some day!

Foreign Fling – Whites (or whitish things)

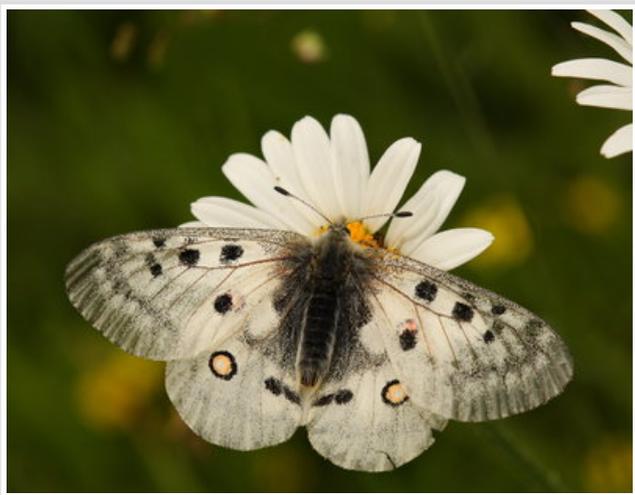
One of the big targets of the trip, for me, was to finally get a photo of an Apollo, and to put 3 years of hurt behind me 😊. Having seen them in the Cevennes in 2012 (many distant fly-bys) and again in the Alps in 2014 (more distant fly-bys), it was a case, I hoped, of 3rd time lucky!

With this in mind, the first place that I visited, was the site that I had seen Apollos at last year, pursuing them hopelessly round a meadow in a woodland clearing as they skimmed effortlessly over the flowers. They are stunning butterflies just to watch in flight, with an amazing mixture of glides and powerful wingbeats that are clearly audible when they fly quickly past. For me, they are perfectly suited to their upland habitat with its stunning scenery, and certainly deserve their name, with all its divine connotations.

In the end, it was third time lucky, and my visit co-incident with the only cloudy spell of the trip, meaning that the Apollos were marginally less active, and I could finally get those photos! The first one I spotted, was perched on an Oxeye Daisy, and being courted by a frantic Black-Veined White.



Apollo and Black - Veined White



Apollo



Apollo



Apollo

After moving on, I enjoyed several more, still active despite the cloud, before another posed, basking on a rock.



Apollo

Having finally settled my score with the Apollos, I was delighted, but it seems I have not yet lifted my curse, the only Clouded Apollo that I saw zoomed past me and was halfway up the mountainside within 30 seconds – one for another time!

On our brief Loire stopover, I did manage to find a couple of Scarce Swallowtails, sadly without the camera, but whilst walking in the Foret d'Orleans, *gorganus* posed beautifully!



Swallowtail

A good variety of whites was also seen: Black – Veined, Green–Veined, Small, Large, Wood (in the Loire) and Mountain Green–Veined at higher altitudes, a new one for me. I was particularly pleased to catch up with a couple more species of Clouded Yellow: Moorland and Mountain, the former very obliging and seen at a mixture of medium to high altitude sites, and the latter, generally above 2000m, far less so. Pale, Berger's, and 'our' Clouded Yellow were also seen – a full house 😊



Moorland Clouded Yellow



Moorland Clouded Yellow

Re: William

by Padfield, 19-Jul-15 04:18 AM GMT

Really enjoying your alpine pictures, William. You have a brilliant eye for composition.

Guy

Re: William

by William, 21-Jul-15 06:06 AM GMT

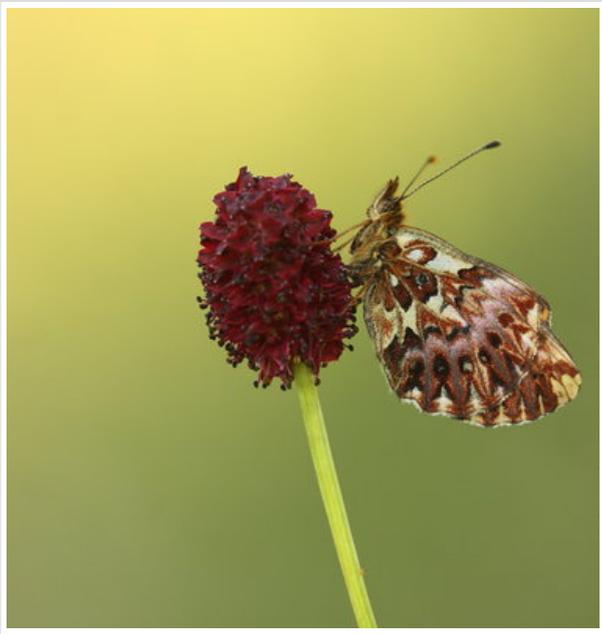
[Foreign Fling – Fritillaries](#)

Fritillaries are a family with an aura of rarity in the UK, I'm always excited to find Silver-Washed Fritillaries feeding in the hedgerows on the patch, and make special trips to see some of the others.

It was exciting to see them in real abundance in the Alps, with 20 species: Silver-Washed (a couple in the woods), Dark Green, High Brown, Niobe (all common in flowery places), singletons of Queen of Spain and Spotted, Marbled (a couple in the Loire), Lesser Marbled (easily the commonest one, in damp, flowery meadows), Titania's (playing second fiddle to Lesser Marbled, and common in the same habitat), Shepherd's, Mountain (firsts for me, and sadly very difficult to approach), Pearl-Bordered (quite a few at higher altitudes), Weaver's, Glanville, False Heath, Heath, Provençal, Meadow, and most excitingly, 2 Asian Fritillaries, a couple of tatty but beautiful specimens at two different sites.



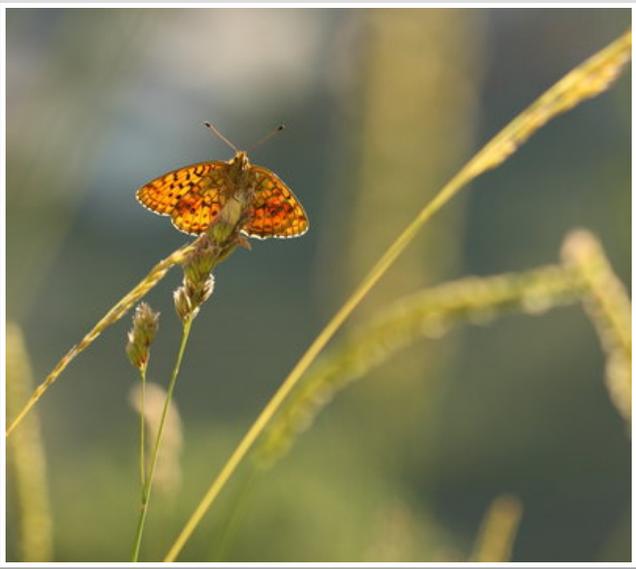
Lesser Marbled Fritillary



Titania's Fritillary



Heath Fritillary



Lesser Marbled Fritillary



Niobe Fritillary



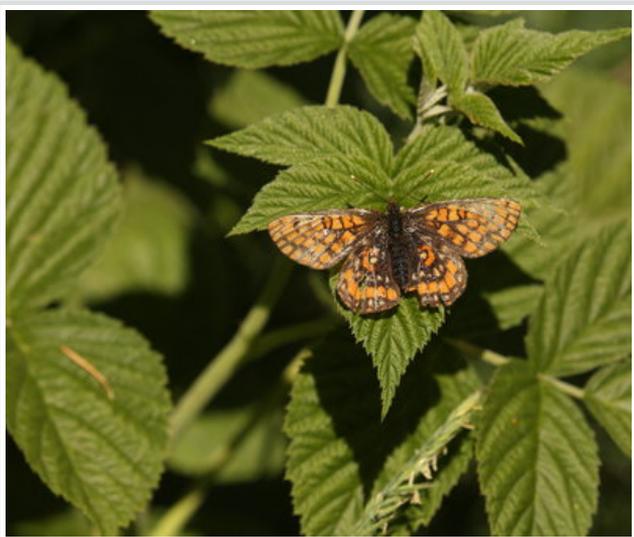
False Heath Fritillary



Heath Fritillary



Lesser Marbled Fritillary



Asian Fritillary



Silver-Washed and Meadow

Re: William

by David M, 21-Jul-15 07:00 AM GMT

Great Asian Fritillary, William, and your False Heath image is a real beauty. I've personally never seen one so dark.

Re: William

by Neil Hulme, 21-Jul-15 07:33 AM GMT

Hi William,

Sadly, I have far too little time to catch up with as much UKB activity as I'm used to; but it's always a pleasure when I find a few moments to look at your atmospheric images, which beautifully capture the magic of butterflies beyond even the most well-crafted mugshot. Nobody does it better!

BWs, Neil

Re: William

by Pauline, 21-Jul-15 03:01 PM GMT

Beautifully composed photographs William - my particular favourite is the Apollo 😊, and the Titania 😊 and the Marbled Fritillary 😊, and the 😊

Re: William

by Goldie M, 21-Jul-15 08:15 PM GMT

Hi! William, your photos remind me of Water colours (delicate works of art) love them 😊 Goldie 😊

Re: William

by William, 24-Jul-15 05:31 AM GMT

Thanks, David, I was delighted to stumble across the Asian Fritillaries (more luck than judgement), though I'd swap one for a Glandon Blue 😊. It would be nice to get the odd mugshot once in a while, Neil, and a big thank you for your kind comments, a huge compliment - hope the Fritillaries and Emperors have been behaving themselves, look forward to seeing some photos on your diary when you get the time! Thanks Pauline and Goldie too 😊

Foreign fling - Skippers and Others

Skippers were out in force throughout the trip, with Essex and Small omnipresent pretty much wherever there was grass.



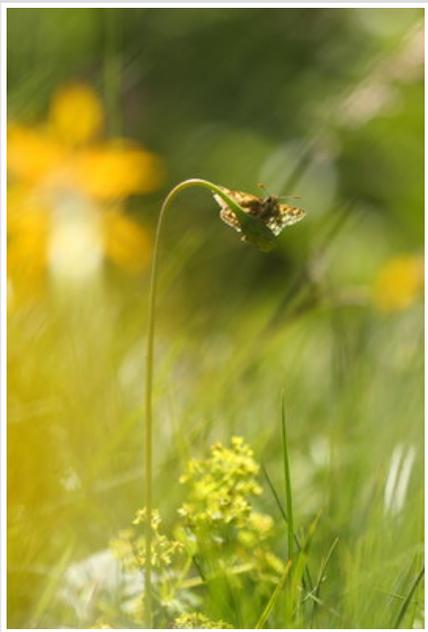
Essex Skipper

Pyrgus were encountered sparingly, and in the heat, were difficult to approach. The bulk of them were seen at higher altitudes where, on the short turf, Silver – Spotted Skippers popped up fairly regularly.



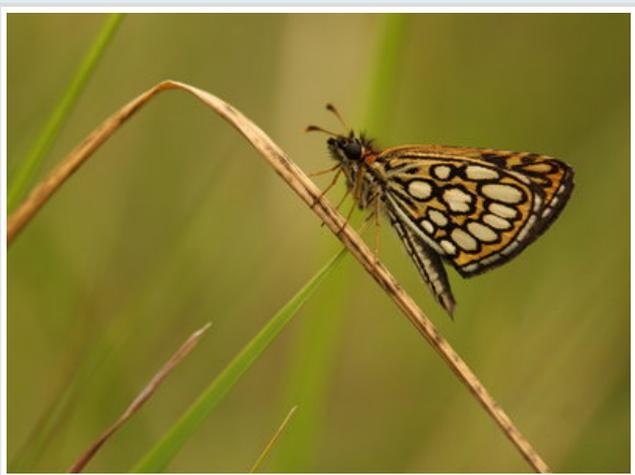
Silver – Spotted Skipper

In wooded areas and by streams, I was pleased to spot the odd Chequered Skipper.



Chequered Skipper

And in the Loire, Large Chequered Skippers were seen in good numbers, they really do *skip*, with an almost yo-yo like flight – wonderful!



Large Chequered Skipper



Large Chequered Skipper

In the same place, I found a couple of Glanville Fritillary larvae.



Glanville Fritillary larva

Whilst up in the Alpine meadows, I enjoyed the wonderfully bizarre owlfly, *Libelloides coccajus*.



Libelloides coccajus

All in all, an amazing holiday, with the sheer variety and abundance of insect life in the Alps something that will live long in the memory – I'll be back 😊

Re: William

by Wurzel, 24-Jul-15 06:12 AM GMT

Fantastic images William 🍷🍷 That Large Chequered Skipper is a stunner 😊 And what branch does the Owlfly fall into – it looks like a cross between a Dragonfly and a Skipper 🤪🤪

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 30-Jul-15 02:18 AM GMT

Thanks Wurzel, Large Chequered Skippers are wonderful butterflies 😊

Catching Up

Since returning from France, things have been fairly quiet butterfly-wise, what with the awful, windy weather. Nevertheless, I've managed to get out and about close to home, and things seem to be ticking over.

Grayling are putting on a strong showing on the Quantocks, the amount of joined-up habitat here is unusual in its size, not just the odd isolated reserve, and these, and Green Hairstreaks can be found all the way along the hills.



Grayling



Grayling

I was pleased to also record a couple of flyby Dark Green Fritillaries (and an amazingly late Green Hairstreak), the first records for 15 years, it would seem 😊

Marbled Whites are also around in fairly good numbers, these two were seen during a failed hunt for some more Dark Greens.



Marbled White



Marbled White

I was delighted to find a Meadow Brown egg-laying on my wildflower bank last week...



Meadow Brown Ovum



Meadow Brown Ovum

And a Large Skipper doing the same whilst on a local walk...



Large Skipper Ovum

Continuing the theme of immature stages, one of my Brown Hairstreak pupae popped open a few days ago, revealing an absolutely stunning male.



Brown Hairstreak - Male



Brown Hairstreak – Male

This Common Blue larva, looking for a place to pupate, met a sadder end, at the hands of a marauding earwig that somehow snuck into its pot.



Common Blue Larva

Re: William

by Matsukaze, 30-Jul-15 04:22 AM GMT

Excellent news on the Graylings, they are gone from the Mendips east of Crook Peak now and even abroad I only seem to come across them in ones and twos. They are butterflies of great character and I really must make the time to visit a strong colony and watch them for a good while.

Do Keeled Skimmers turn up widely in the Quantock combes? There are the odd records of what is a rare species in Somerset, and it would be good to get a sense of how common they actually are there.

Re: William

by Pete Eeles, 30-Jul-15 04:40 AM GMT

Excellent observations and posts of late, William! I just love the "colouring up" of the Meadow Brown ovum!

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: William

by William, 30-Jul-15 05:48 AM GMT

Thanks Pete, I was pretty chuffed with the Meadow Brown egg, it's nice to think they all colour up in different ways – each one is unique 😊

Chris, Graylings and Green Hairstreaks are everywhere on the Quantocks – I would highly recommend it 😊. If you fancy looking for Graylings, I'd park at Staple Plain Car Park (ST117410), and walk up to the hill to the trigpoint and then along to Bicknoller post, I saw about 20 on that route the other day, all perching on the path. Dragonfly wise, I haven't seen a great deal on the Quantocks (yet!) just a few Broad – Bodied Chasers and an Emperor at Wilmott's Pool (ST152382) – whereabouts were the Keeled Skimmers, I'll keep an eye out, as that's a species I haven't seen!

Re: William

by David M, 30-Jul-15 06:10 AM GMT

Some beautiful, sharp images there, William. Your male Brown Hairstreak is so fresh I mistook him for a female!!

Re: William

by Wurzel, 31-Jul-15 06:13 AM GMT

That is indeed a stunning Brostroke 🍷 Not long now til they really get going 😊

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by William, 10-Aug-15 01:51 AM GMT

Thanks chaps, I was delighted to have the chance to examine the Brown Hairstreak up close, definitely one of our most exquisite butterflies 😊

Portland

Having visited the legendary 'isle' of Portland before, and been amazed by the quantity of rare butterflies, and the place itself, I was delighted to get the chance to visit again this August, with some friends.

For me, Portland always seems like a giant industrial estate, with grassland interspersed with both abandoned and working quarries, after the island's sought after honey-coloured limestone. Despite the heavy industry, and no doubt because of it, butterflies thrive on Portland, with the abandoned quarries, with poor stony soils perfect for Kidney and Horseshoe Vetch hosting thriving colonies of Dingy Skipper, Small Blue, Adonis Blue, Common Blue, Silver – Studded Blue, and one of my targets, Chalkhill Blue.

Safe to say, they were absolutely everywhere, indeed, they could hardly be avoided, being found in small numbers in any area on the island with wildflowers, and in extremely large numbers in the quarries on the West Cliffs, in particular Bower's Quarry, where spectacular communal roosts could often be found during the evening – amazing!

Lulworth Skippers were still around in small numbers, in the grassland around the bird observatory (where I stayed – great place!), albeit looking rather sad, along with a few Small Blues, Common Blues and Wall Browns – a thoroughly enjoyable trip 😊



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blues



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blues



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue – Marbled White Combo



Chalkhill Blue



Chalkhill Blue

And my favourite picture, a blue and a view – Portland at its finest 😊



Chalkhill Blues

Re: William

by Butterflysaurus rex, 10-Aug-15 03:23 AM GMT

Lovely selection of photos William, it's been a long time since I last visited Portland, your report and photos make me want to return there.

All the best

James

Re: William

by Katrina, 10-Aug-15 06:20 AM GMT

More charming photos but the photo of Chalk Hill Blue on the rock is awesome! I like the way the lichen matches the orange on the wing. 😊

Re: William

by William, 13-Sep-15 03:12 AM GMT

Catching Up

August has been a busy month, and it's been difficult to keep on top of photographs with so much happening. The second rescued Brown Hairstreak produced a rather nice pale pupa back in early July, and emerged as a beautiful female in early August – an absolutely stunning butterfly!



Brown Hairstreak Larva - Pupating



Brown Hairstreak Pupa



Brown Hairstreak

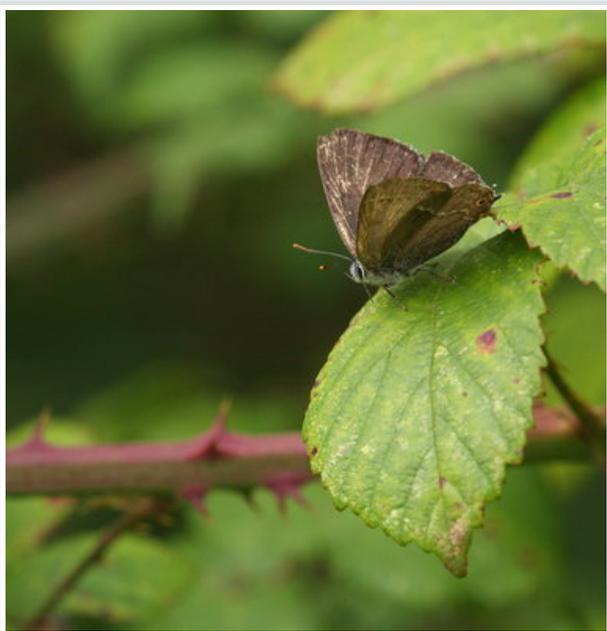


Brown Hairstreak

During my visit to Portland I did pop into Alner's Gorse as well, where I caught up with many more Brown Hairstreaks (all bar one male), several Purple and my first low-level White-Letter, at one point, all three species were feeding on the same Bramble bush, quite amazing!



White - Letter Hairstreak



Purple Hairstreak

Back at home again, there's been lots of egg-laying/larval doings in and around the garden.



Comma Ovum



Common Blue - First Instar



Large Skipper Ovum



Large Skipper Larva



Large Skipper Larva



Large Skipper Larval Tube

Of particular excitement, was a Brown Argus ovum on some Common Rock Rose that I had planted on my wildflower bank. This is by no means a common butterfly in my part of the world, and it was interesting to find the egg on this foodplant, which I've never found in my area (I think they probably use Cut-Leaved Cranesbill).



Brown Argus Ovum

Re: William

by Wurzel, 14-Sep-15 05:19 AM GMT

Three Hairstreak species in one day? 🤩👍👍 Cracking shots too! 😁

Have a goodun

Wurzel

Re: William

by David M, 14-Sep-15 06:14 AM GMT

You have a great eye for early stages, William, not to mention the ability to provide excellent images.

Thanks for sharing.

Re: William

by Pete Eeles, 14-Sep-15 06:47 AM GMT

Excellent observations, William! Keep up the good work 😊

Cheers,

- Pete

Re: William

by Maximus, 14-Sep-15 10:07 PM GMT

Stunning freshly emerged female Brown Hairstreak, William and excellent early stages images as always 😊

Re: William

by Neil Freeman, 15-Sep-15 03:59 AM GMT

Hi William, great photos of the early stages and stunning Brown Hairstreak images.

Cheers,

Neil.

Re: William

by Butterflysaurus rex, 15-Sep-15 05:33 AM GMT

WOW three species of Hairstreak all feeding on the same bramble bush at once! That's not a sight you'll see every day in the British Isles! Great stuff as ever William. You must be really pleased to finally catch up with the While Letter Hairstreak. Hopefully I will do the same with the elusive Purple and see one low down next year.

All the best

James